



Connecticut Association of Boards of Education, Inc.

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**Testimony
submitted to the
Education Committee**

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SB 1 AN ACT CONCERNING CHILDHOOD MENTAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH SERVICES IN SCHOOLS.

SB 274 AN ACT CONCERNING MINORITY TEACHER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION.

SB 427 AN ACT CONCERNING VARIOUS REVISIONS AND ADDITIONS TO THE EDUCATION STATUTES.

HB 5038 AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE GOVERNOR'S BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING EDUCATION.

HB 5322 AN ACT CONCERNING THE CREATION OF A HUMAN SERVICES PERMIT AND A REQUIREMENT THAT SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKERS CONDUCT HOME VISITS DURING THE SCHOOL YEAR.

HB 5323 AN ACT ESTABLISHING A WORKING GROUP TO EXAMINE WAYS TO CONSOLIDATE OR ELIMINATE CERTAIN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND IN-SERVICE TRAINING REQUIREMENTS FOR EDUCATORS.

HB 5465 AN ACT INCREASING EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATOR SALARIES AND EXPANDING CHILD CARE OPPORTUNITIES FOR FAMILIES.

HB 5466 AN ACT CONCERNING ASSORTED REVISIONS AND ADDITIONS TO THE EDUCATION STATUTES.

CABE supports SB 1, An Act Concerning Childhood Mental and Physical Health Services in Schools. The use of a survey on the employment of social worker and psychologists to gauge the needs of a community will be an asset, but we recognize there are needs in every district.

We also know that the grade configurations differ from district to district and they maybe utilizing different mental health professionals based on their needs. An elementary district will have different needs than a regional high school district. CABE supports the establishment of a grant program for hiring and retaining additional school social workers and school psychologists.

CABE supports the development of a grant for opioid antagonists and training for nurses and a qualified school employee. Every community needs to be vigilant in fighting the devastating effects of drugs.

Additionally, CABE supports the establishment of a minority teacher candidate scholarship program. The small increase in minority teachers from 8.1% in 2014 to 10% in 2020 does not match the need. The many programs building a more diverse educator workforce will take time to come to fruition but CABE also knows that districts can't just wait. This program should have short term goals and sustained long term efforts.

The establishment of a task force on Ableism will help to better understand the needs of students and work to improve the school community as a whole to create a better school culture. CABE is pleased to assist in these efforts.

CABE supports efforts to increase school readiness programs. The best start a student can get is in the beginning of their education.

CABE supports SB 274, An Act Concerning Minority Teacher Recruitment and Retention, which would require the existing task force to study and evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of existing minority teacher recruitment and retention programs and policies.

The lack of minority representation in public schools is an issue of concern to all districts in Connecticut. We want our students to have the opportunity to learn from educators from a variety of backgrounds, races, and cultures. While progress has been made in increasing the number of educators of color, much work remains to be done. Currently students of color account for over 40% of Connecticut's student population, while only 10% of the state public school teachers and administrators are people of color. CABE has adopted a position urging all districts to continue their efforts to increase the recruitment of qualified individuals who reflect the state's diversity to the teaching profession and administration. CABE urges you to support this and other initiatives to recruit and retain minority educators in Connecticut.

CABE supports SB 427, An Act Concerning Various Revisions and Additions to the Education Statutes. District are having difficulty finding bus drivers and any incentives, in this case a rebate on their license fee and criminal history records check, may help to attract applicants. The job market is pulling potential applicants in many directions. The responsibilities of a bus driver from road safety and making sure students are behaving safely on the bus, are awesome responsibilities that not everyone wants to take on.

CABE supports HB 5038, An Act Implementing the Governor's Budget Recommendations Concerning Education. CABE is glad to see the bipartisan commitment to fund ECS continue and is pleased that changes to consistently complete the phasing in will be instituted. Creation of the Graduated Alliance District program recognizes the challenge in districts improving to then find themselves removed from SDE supports and right into struggling to maintain that improvement. A graduated transition allows districts to continue their improvement efforts.

The Special Education Excess Cost Reimbursement Grant remains capped in the Governor's budget and we ask that you remove that cap so that districts can more predictably plan their expenditures. We also lobby Congress to meet their commitment to fund IDEA. Loss of these funds impacts the district's full budget as mandated programs for students with special needs can force a district to remove funding for programs outside of the special education designation.

CABE recognizes that there are many programs that assist districts with diversity, equity and inclusion. As the state and each district work to attract, hire and retain a more diverse educator workforce, we support the various

partnerships districts are developing to grow teachers here in Connecticut.

We have heard from districts that the need for additional mental health resources is tremendous. While students at different ages may need different supports, ALL need to have mental health personnel and programming within the schools and when situations warrant, parents need to have access to services in the community. Efforts to increase the pipeline for more mental health professionals can't stop at the school house door. Efforts that the SDE is making with Aperture Education to work to have educators recognize a student's mental health needs are vital to helping students avoid a mental health crisis.

CABE supports the provisions of HB 5322, which would allow the State Board of Education, upon request of a local or regional board of education or regional educational service center, to issue a human service permit to applicants with specialized training, experience or expertise in social work or human services, psychology or sociology. This would enable the individual to be employed by a board of education to provide mental health and human services to students. We know that the availability of mental health professionals to meet the social and emotional needs of students is inadequate to meet the overwhelming needs. This would allow a board of education to provide additional resources to their students and we urge your support.

CABE strongly supports HB 5323, which proposes to recreate a task force similar to the one established in 2016 to address professional development mandates. That task force, consisting of representatives from school boards, superintendents, principals, teachers, and paraprofessionals, with staff support from the State Department of Education, reached consensus on a series of recommendations which were ultimately adopted by the legislature. We urge you to go a step further and include a component that was contained in the recommendations of the task force to establish a Professional Development Council to review and provide feedback on the relevance and importance of any proposed legislation requiring professional development. We continue to believe this is an important process recommendation.

CABE supports the provisions of HB 5465, which support existing school readiness and other state funded preschool programs. Continued efforts by the General Assembly to appropriate sufficient funding to make early care and education programs available to all children in need are critical. CABE supports efforts by the State Department of Education and other public private child and family service agencies to promote and encourage a wide range of public and private provider preschool programs and services. Local boards of education also need the flexibility to design, develop and implement early childhood education programs to increase the likelihood of children school success and decrease special education costs.

CABE is in support of HB 5466, An Act Concerning Assorted Revisions and Additions to the Education Statutes. If section 3, providing for six appointments by the legislative leaders to the State Board of Education is adopted, we encourage legislative leaders to select individuals focused on the State Board of Education's goal of providing an excellent public education to every child, regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, family wealth, zip code or disability status and to that represent diverse backgrounds and experiences.

Thank you for your attention to these issues.